



Her eyes glowed with envy. If only she could get some for his grave, just one little bunch.

All Saints' Day

By Maurice Level

Illustrated by H. R. Ballinger

DRAPED in a loose hospital wrap that made her seem even thinner than she was, the girl was standing lost in thought at the foot of her shiny white bed.

Her childish face was wasted, and her idle eyes, sad, faithless and circled with dark rings, were so unattractively large they seemed to light up her whole face. Her cheeks burned with a hectic flush, and the deep lines that ran down to her mouth looked as if they had been worn there by the flow of unceasing tears.

She hung her head when the house-surgeon stopped beside her.

"Well, little No. 4, what's (did I hear?) You want to go out?"

"Yes, sir," the voice was barely more than a whisper.

"But that's very foolish. You've only been up two or three days. In weather like this, too. You'd certainly fall ill again. Wait a day or two. You're not unhappy here? Has anyone been unkind to you?"

"No, oh, no, sir."

"What is it then?"

"There was more energy in her tone as she said:

"I must go out."

And as if anticipating his question she continued quickly:

"This is All Saints' Day. I promised to take some flowers to my sweetheart's grave. I promised."

"He has only me. . . . If I don't go, no one will. . . . I promised."

A tear shone under her eyelid. She wiped it away with a finger.

The house-surgeon was touched. And either out of curiosity, or so as not to seem awkward and leave her without some word of comfort, he asked:

"Is it long since he died?"

"Nearly a year."

"What was the matter with him?"

She seemed to shrink, to become even more frail, her chest more hollow, her hands thinner as, her eyes fell closed, her lips trembling, she murmured:

"He was excited."

The house-surgeon tic his lip, saying in a low voice:

"Poor child. . . . I'm very sorry. If you really must go out, go. But take care not to catch cold. You must come back to-morrow."

ONCE outside the hospital gates, she began to shiver.

It was a dreary autumn morning. Moisture trickled down the walls. Everything was gray: the sky, the houses, the naked trees and the misty distance where people hurried along anxious to get out of the damp streets.

It had been the middle of summer when she had fallen ill, and her dress was a brightly hued one of this season. The crumpled ribbon that encircled her wasted neck made her look even more pitiable. The skirt, blouse and necktie might have smiled back at the sunshine, but in the cold gray setting they seemed to droop with sadness.

She started off with an uncertain walk, stopping

every now and then because she was out of breath and her head swimming.

The people she passed turned to look after her. She seemed to hesitate as if wishing to speak to them, then afraid, walked on, glancing nervously from right to left. In this way she crossed half Paris. She stopped when she came to the Quai, standing to watch the slow, muddy flow of the river. The piercing cold cut through her and, feeling she could not bear much more, she started off again.

When she got to Place Maubert and the Avenue des Gobelins she felt almost at home, for she was now in the neighborhood in which she had lived. Soon she began to see faces she knew, and she heard someone say, as she passed:

"Surely that's Vanda's girl. . . . How she has changed!"

"Which Vanda?"

"Vanda the maid."

She quickened her steps, pressing her hands against her face so as not to hear the end of the word. . . .

It was getting dark when she at last arrived at the wretched little hotel where she had lodged before she fell ill. She went in. Street-girls and their men were playing cards in the little café down-stairs. When they saw her they called out:

"Hullo! Here's Blue Eyes" for that used to be her nickname. "Come and have a drink, Blue Eyes. Here's a seat. . . . come along."

Their welcome touched her, but the thick, rank smoke made her cough, and she could hardly breathe as she replied:

"No. . . . I've no time now. . . . Is Madame in?"

"Yes, there she is."

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